

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LENING 01939 081349Z

70

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-07 /020 W

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R 081302Z DEC 76

FM AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2832

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USDOC WASHDC

UNCLAS LENINGRAD 1939

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: BEXP, US, UR

SUBJ: CONTAINERIZATION ME/S (MAY 16-20, 1977)

REF: USDOC 20709

1. WE STRONGLY SUPPORT INCLUSION OF LENINGRAD IN CONTAINERIZATION ME/S PROPOSED FOR MAY 1977. WE BELIEVE THAT PROJECTED GROWTH OF BOTH LENINGRAD AND RIGA AS MAJOR CONTAINER PORTS OF WESTERN SOVIET UNION WOULD MERIT HOLDING ME/S HERE FOR SPECIALISTS EVEN IF BROADER CONSIDERATION OF HOLDING OF INTERPORT EXHIBITION LATER IN THE YEAR WERE NOT PRESENT. WE WOULD ALSO RECOMMEND THAT THE ME/S BE AS COMPLETE AS POSSIBLE INCLUDING EXHIBITS AS WELL AS SEMINARS FOR MAXIMUM IMPACT DURING EXPECTED SHORT STAY IN CITY. AN UPDATED REPORT OF DEVELOPMENTS IN CONTAINER AREA AT LENINGRAD IS CONTAINED PARAS 3-5 BELOW IN SUPPORT OF THESE RECOMMENDATIONS.

2. GIVEN EXTREMELY LIMITED STAFF OF THE CONSULATE GENERAL, IF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ME/S IN LENINGRAD IS DECIDED UPON, PROVISION SHOULD BE MADE FOR APPROPRIATE TDY DETAIL OF PERSONNEL TO THE POST TO HANDLE ACTUAL DETAILS OF SETTING UP AND OPERATION PROJECT.

3. A RECENT VISIT TO LENINGRAD PORT ENABLED US TO OBTAIN TIMELY UPDATE ON CONTAINERIZATION PLANS FROM LENINGRAD PORT GENERAL MANAGER, O.A. TEREKHOV AND DEPUTY MANAGER, M.A. RYAZANOV. DISCUSSION REVEALED THAT WHILE CONTAINERIZATION GROWTH RATE AT LENINGRAD PORT APPARENTLY HAS BEEN SCALED DOWN FROM EARLIER

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ESTIMATES, DEVELOPMENTS OF PORT'S CONTAINER FACILITIES WILL

PROCEDE AT RAPID RATE IN THIS FIVE YEAR PERIOD, PRESENTING
GOOD TRADE OPPORTUNITIES FOR AMERICAN BUSINESS.

4. PORT MANAGERS INDICATED THAT LENINGRAD PORT HANDLED 63,000
INTERNATIONAL CONTAINERS CARRYING 700,000 TONS OF CARGO IN PAST
YEAR--A FIGURE SUBSTANTIALLY ABOVE 56,000 CONTAINERS WITH 400,000
TONS WHICH PORT HANDLED IN 1974, LAST YEAR FOR WHICH WE HAVE
STATISTICS. ACCORDING TO PORT MANAGER, THIS QUANTITY AND
WEIGHT SHOULD AT LEAST "DOUBLE" IN THIS FIVE YEAR PERIOD.
THIS WOULD PUT HANDLING AT APPROXIMATELY 130,000 INTERNATIONAL
CONTAINERS WITH CARGOES OF 1,400,000 TONS ANNUALLY BY 1980--
FIGURE SIGNIFICANTLY BELOW 2 MILLION TONS (APPARENTLY NOT
"CONTAINERS" AS REPORTED LENINGRAD 1798) EARLIER
ESTIMATED. MANAGERS WERE RELUCTANT TO PROVIDE SPECIFIC
FIGURES ON FUTURE CONTAINER GROWTH TO 1980 AND BEYOND, ASSURING
US ONLY THAT CONTAINER FACILITIES IN PORT WOULD CONTINUE
TO EXPAND PROPORTIONATELY AS CONTAINER TRADE GROWS. MANAGERS
DID SAY, HOWEVER, THAT THUS FAR 9-12 MILLION RUBLES HAVE BEEN
EXPENDED ON LENINGRAD'S CONTAINER FACILITIES--WHICH CONSISTS
OF REBUILDING AN EXISTING PORTION OF THE PORT--AND THAT
APPROXIMATELY 15 MILLION RUBLES MORE ARE SLATED BE SPENT IN
PERIOD UP TO 1980. MANAGERS ALSO NOTED THAT PRIMARY CONTAINER
PORTS IN WEST PART SOVIET UNION THUS WILL BE LENINGRAD AND
RIGA--ALTHOUGH VOSTOCHNIY, CONTAINER PORT WHICH JAPANESE ARE
HELPING TO BUILD AND FURNISHING WITH "MOST MODERN EQUIPMENT",
WILL ACTUALLY BE LARGEST CONTAINER PORT IN SOVIET UNION WHEN
IT IS COMPLETED.

5. LENINGRAD PORT MANAGER MADE IT CLEAR IN DISCUSSION THAT
SOVIET UNION FIRMLY COMMITTED TO FURTHER EXPANSION OF
CONTAINERIZATION CONCEPT. HE EXPRESSED HIS OWN STRONG PERSONAL
SUPPORT FOR LONG TERM INVESTMENT AT LENINGRAD PORT IN THIS
AREA POINTING OUT THAT, UNLIKE IN WEST, CONTAINERIZATION
EXPANSION IN SOVIET UNION ACTUALLY BEGAN AT PORTS, NOT WITH
TRUCKING OR RAIL TRANSPORT SECTOR. PORT MANAGER ALSO COMMENTED
THAT ONE MAJOR UNSOLVED PROBLEM FOR PORT IS WAREHOUSING
OF GROWING NUMBER OF CONTAINERS. ACCORDINGLY PROPOSED ME/S
MAY ALSO WISH INCLUDE MATERIAL IN THIS AREA, IF IT HAS NOT
ALREADY DONE SO.

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PAGE 03 LENING 01939 081349Z

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 08 DEC 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976LENING01939
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760454-0490
From: LENINGRAD
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761263/aaaacbyk.tel
Line Count: 107
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: wolfsd
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <02 JUN 2004 by hattaycs>; APPROVED <04 AUG 2004 by wolfsd>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CONTAINERIZATION ME/S (MAY 16-20, 1977)
TAGS: BEXP, US, UR
To: STATE MOSCOW
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006